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Straight Line Alphabet

for

Lettering in the Grades

by

Milton Clauser

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DEC 30 1916
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No. 1.

Ch. 19 - Jan 6. '19.

INTRODUCTION

Mechanical drawing classes in the high school used to spend two or four hours a week for several months on lettering. Since manual training and art courses have been introduced into the schools it has been the tendency to expect grade teachers to accomplish, in a few minutes a week with grade children, what heretofore was not done any too well by the more mature high school pupils in a more liberal time-allotment. If high school teachers found free-hand lettering such a difficult task, it is just likely that we are expecting from grade children that which is beyond their capabilities.

If titles on drawings and construction work are put in script, very many

drawings, otherwise good, are spoiled by weak penmanship; and, titles written on drawings do not look well even if the penmanship is good. Some style of lettering for the grades seems essential even if the draftsman's free-hand lettering is too difficult. Yet, at first thought, it seems a waste of time to teach one alphabet in the grades and another in the high school.

It is the object of this pamphlet to suggest an alphabet simple enough to be used even in the lower grades, yet such, that it could be made to grow into the free-hand alphabet used by the draftsman; an alphabet whose letters, though made of straight lines, are of such shapes that their similarity to the draftsman's alphabet will be a very considerable help later on. (See pages 7 and 11.)

After having made the alphabet, it was noticed that very slight additions would change it into quite artistic alphabets for art work. (See page 16.)

Straight-Line Alphabet

While primarily intended for manual training and drawing classes, the alphabet here presented can be used in all the grades. As none but straight lines are used in making it, in the kindergarten the letters can be built with sticks, pegs or blocks. In the first grade they could be built with strips of paper and later on cut out with the scissors. In the second grade the capitals could be drawn on the blackboard and on paper. And by the time pupils reach the fourth grade they could make both the capitals and the small letters. In the upper grades pupils might be shown how slight changes in the shape of additional lines to these letters might help their artistic effect.

Tools Used

These letters can be made free-hand in the lower grades; but, after they have acquired some knowledge of the shapes of the letters and can spare some

attention for the rule it were well if they used the rule in making them. The best results are obtained, however, if the lettering is taught by the use of the following tools:—Drawing board, T-square, 45-degree triangle, 60-degree triangle, rule, thumb tacks and an M. H. pencil.

How Tools Should Be Used

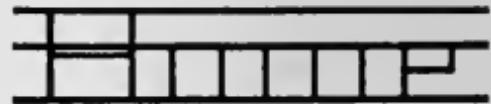
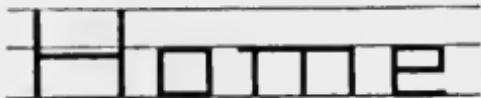
Use the T-square with the head at the left end of the drawing board only. Hold it tightly against the board so that the head, for its entire length, will be in contact with the drawing board. From the very beginning, pupils should be taught to form the habit of shifting the T-square with the left hand only; and, when doing so the farther end of the blade should not be touched by the right hand. If the teacher will watch carefully that this is done during the first few lessons, the matter of handling the drawing set will soon be acquired. In drawing horizontal lines the T-square is used. Both T-square and triangle are used for vertical lines.

To fasten the drawing paper, tack one upper corner; then, holding the T-square with its head tightly against the left end of the board, move the paper so that its lower edge will be in line with the T-square. Then tack the other upper corner.

Lettering Staff

Three lines are used in making the lettering staff. It will be seen that the upper one determines the height of the capitals, while the middle line serves as a guide in determining the height of the small letters. Teachers should call the attention of the pupils to the fact that after the letters are made no one ever again will want to see these guide lines. On the other hand, it is hard to see the letters in a heavy staff. Therefore the staff lines should

be made exceedingly fine
and light. It were well if
teachers would not let pupils



do any lettering in any but light staffs. If the staff is light and the letters heavy, the lead in the lines of the staff will be "on top of the wool" of the paper and the lead in the lines of the letters will be in the bottom of a groove. This makes it possible, by drawing an eraser lightly over the guide lines, to erase the staffs without harming the letters.

The staffs should be made so as to make the capitals $5/16$ of an inch and the small letters $3/16$ of an inch high. When beginning the lettering in the primary grades it were better to make these staffs larger. The capitals might be made $5/8$ of an inch and the small letters $3/8$ of an inch, or they might even be $5/4$ and $3/4$ of an inch, respectively. While for blackboard work the staffs might be made with 5-inch spaces for capitals and 3-inch spaces for small letters. Where very small letters are required these spaces might be made $3/16$ and $2/16$ of an inch.

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N

O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z &

a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r

s t u v w x y z , - ,

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¶

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0

Use the 45-degree angle in making the N, X, Z, &, 4, x and z.

Use the 60-degree angle in making the A, M, Q, V, Y, 5, 7, v, w and y.

Use the 45-degree angle and the 60-degree angle in making the K.

Use the 30-degree angle and the 60-degree angle in making the k.

Add the 30-degree angle and the 45-degree angle when making the R and W.

Notice the projections, called serifs, on the D, G, J, a, f, g, j, m, n and u.

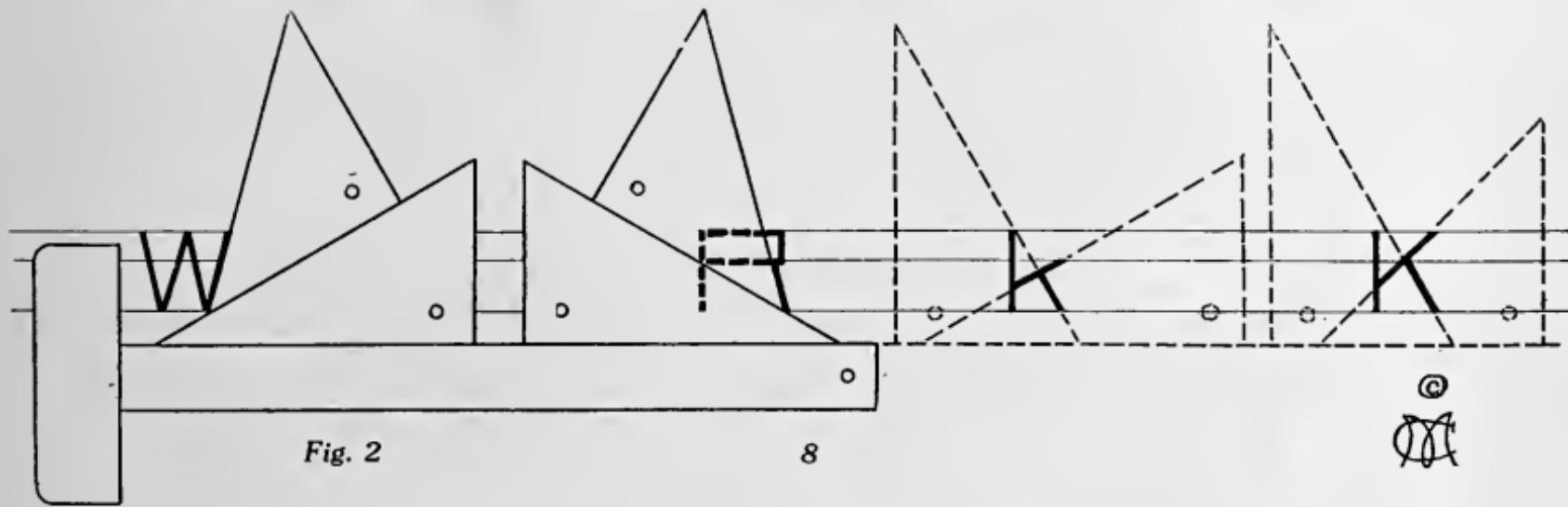


Fig. 2

To get a title in the middle of a sheet, count the number of letters in the title—regard the spaces between words as if they were additional letters—and print the middle letter first, then print forwards and backwards from that letter. One can print a word so as to have it end exactly, say half an inch from the right edge of a sheet, by printing the word backwards.

Draw all the vertical lines for the letters of a word or phrase first. In this way all the horizontal lines for the letters can be made with three adjustments of the T-square. If one letter at a time is made the T-square would have to be adjusted three times for almost every letter. This not only takes more time but brings them out of alinement.

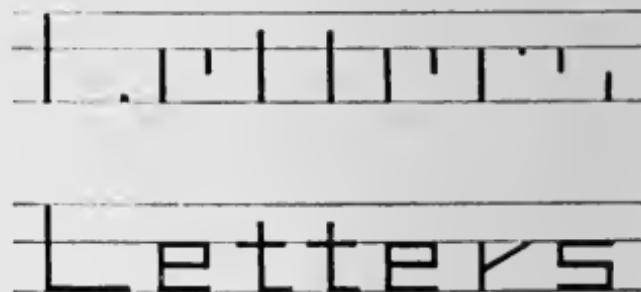


Fig 3

Some Helpful Suggestions

Think before you make a line instead of afterwards. If you should look over the work of almost any mechanical drawing class you would find that some of the pupils are able to accomplish three or four times as much as others; and—tho contrary to what one had a legitimate right to expect—those who do the best work are done first. This efficiency results not so much because of individual skill or effort as because of the method of attack. A careful examination will show that it is due more than anything else to this thinking before making a line.

One word neatly done is educational. A whole page of staffs and abstract letters is a bore. Lack of appreciation of this fact usually results in careless habits followed up by allopathic doses, with a consequent sense of inability, and lack of interest in, and respect for the work.

Get the habit of making a line by one stroke. The boy who thinks before he makes a line has no occasion to run twice over a line. In this straight line lettering you can usually pick out every line that was made with more than

one stroke. A double line usually looks worse than a weak one. There is only one way to correct a weak line and that is to erase it completely and make a new one.

You can not make the fine staff lines with a dull pencil.

Notice how these letters adapt themselves to the free-hand letters made by most draftsmen.

Pupils will not have to unlearn anything. After they have used this alphabet in the grades, they will have acquired a good idea of the general shapes of the letters while they will not have

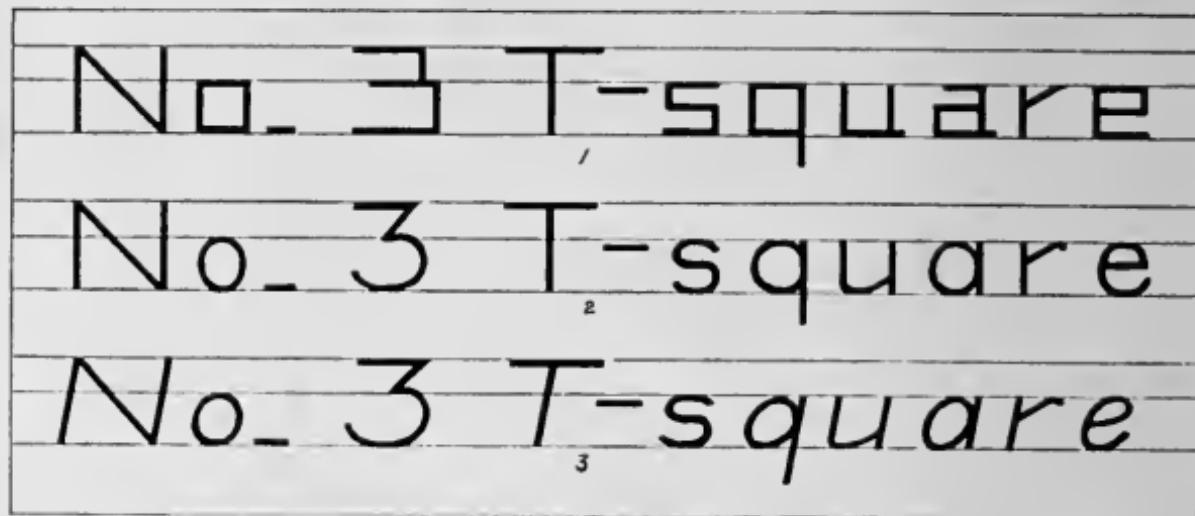


Fig. 4

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N

O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z &

a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r

s t u v w x y z . , - , °

¤

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0

the careless habits that usually result from giving the free-hand lettering too early. This knowledge and practice will help them very materially in their high school lettering. There is a gradual growth from the straight-line letters (Plate 1) thru the rounded form (Plate 2) to the rounded slant letters (Plate 3) employed by the draftsman. After pupils have acquired a knowledge of the forms and some skill in the making of these straight-line letters, they might be shown how the mere rounding of these letters will result in the free-hand alphabets shown in the plates on pages 12 and 14.



Fig. 5

These free-hand alphabets should be made by "stroking" the letters. This simply consists in making all lines in the letters with down strokes and strokes toward the right. With the pen,

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N

O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z &

a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r

s t u v w x y z . , - , •

æ

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0

up-strokes and strokes toward the left are likely to blot and usually result in narrower lines than those made by the down strokes and the strokes toward the right. Pupils should be shown why these letters are drawn and not written. For, if they acquire the habit of stroking them from the very beginning, they need not learn all over again when they come to inking them.

Notice also, how the art work in the grades may be enriched by this straight-line alphabet. Quite different effects may be produced by merely doubling the vertical lines (4), by adding the little lines called serifs, to the tops and bottoms of such letters as the letters of any printed page would suggest (5), by both doubling the lines and adding the serifs (6) or by making the slant alphabets (7, 8, 9, and 10) shown on the pages following. These slant letters can be made by dropping the right end of the T-square for about one-fifth of its length while making the vertical lines of alphabets 1, 4, 5, and 6. This position of the T-square can be fixed by putting a thumb-tack in the board

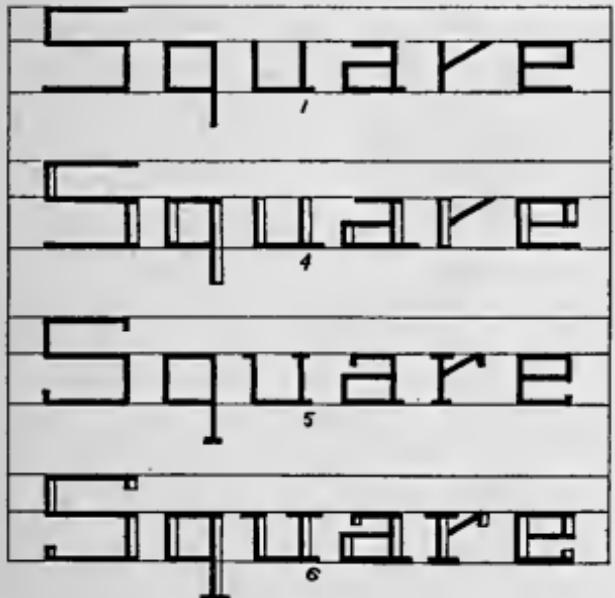


Fig. 6

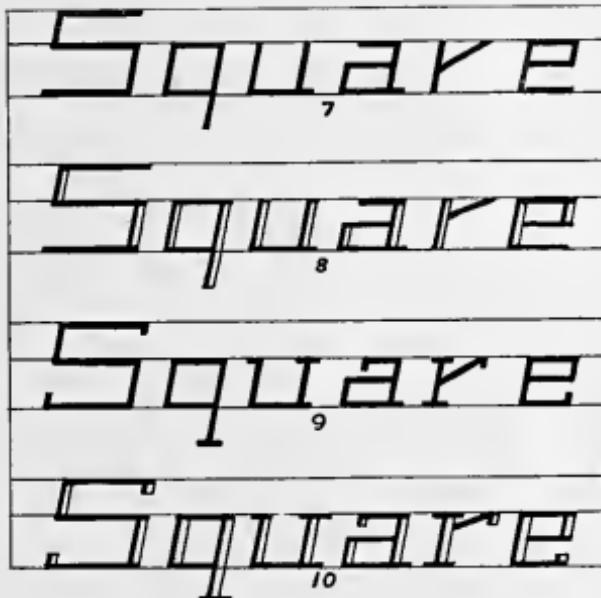


Fig. 7

above each end of the T-square blade. They can, however, be more readily made with a triangle. While the inclined letters usually slope at an angle of 67 to 70 degrees from the base line, a triangle with an angle anywhere from 65 to 80 degrees will serve very well. One can easily make such a triangle. In a right triangle whose base is one-fifth of its altitude the larger acute angle is 78+ degrees; and if the base is two-fifths of the altitude the angle is 68+ degrees.



A B C D E F G H I J K L M N

O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z &

a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r

s t u v w x y z , - , ☐

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 ☐ ☐

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N

O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z &

a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p r

s t u v w x y z , - ,

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

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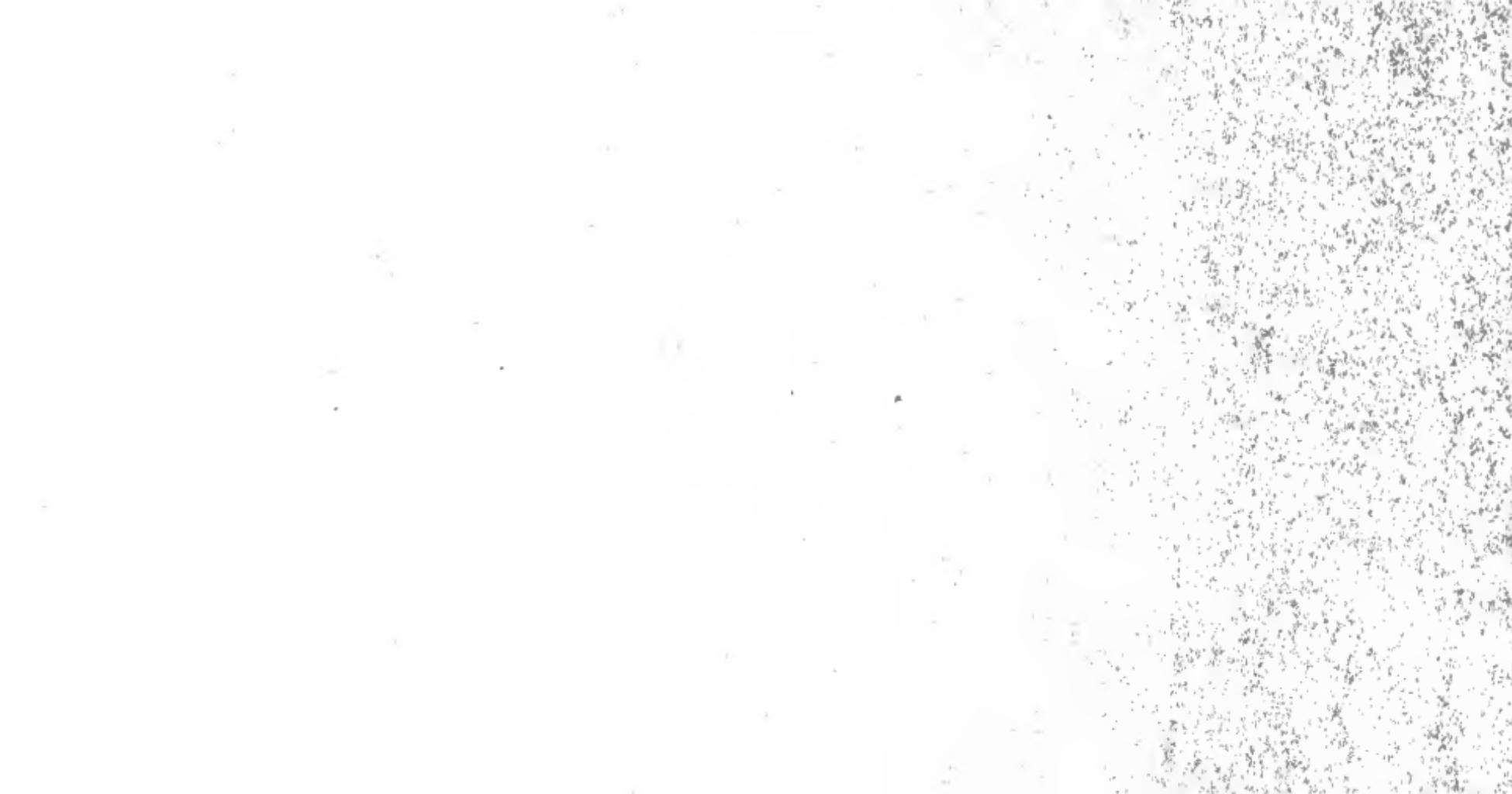
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